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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL
USES OF OUTER SPACE

REPORT OF THE INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

(United Nations Office at Vienna, 28-30 May 1997)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its eighteenth session at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 28 to 30 May 1997. V. Kojarnovitch of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) was elected Chairman. The list of participants is attached to the present report as annex I.

2. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna opened the Meeting. He stated that Member States were placing particular importance on further enhancement of inter-agency coordination within the United Nations system during the ongoing managerial and structural reform process. He emphasized the usefulness of space technology applications in development activities and noted the significant contribution that the Meeting could make, particularly in the following three areas: promotion of sustainable development; promotion of universal access to communication and information services; and enhancement of information technology capacities and effectiveness within the United Nations system. He also stated that the Meeting was expected to play an important role in the work of the United Nations Third UNISPACE Conference (UNISPACE III Conference). He emphasized that inter-agency coordination in space activities should be integrated into the strategy of the United Nations system for global development and joint plans of Member States for further enhancement of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

3. The Meeting adopted the agenda contained in annex II to the present report.

I. SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING

A. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (agenda item 4)

B. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical applications of space technology and related areas (agenda item 5)

1. *Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes (agenda item 5 (a))*

4. It was decided to consider agenda items 4 and 5 (a) above together.

5. The Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs briefed the Meeting on the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two subcommittees in the period 1996-1997, emphasizing the progress

made on the priority items on their agendas and on other matters of inter-agency interest. He informed the Meeting of the agreements reached by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-fourth session, in 1997, on the organization of the UNISPACE III Conference, including its venue, date and provisional annotated agenda.

6. The Expert on Space Applications informed the Meeting that the regional centre for space science and technology education for Asia and the Pacific had started the second course on satellite communications in January 1997 and that similar centres in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa would commence their work by the end of 1997. The Meeting noted the ongoing international efforts to establish a network of space science and technology education and research institutions for central and south-eastern European countries. The Meeting was informed of the progress made by the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in implementing the project on the cooperative information network linking scientists, educators, professionals and decision makers in Africa (COPINE) with a view to establishing an information network linking institutions in Africa and universities in Europe with the use of communication satellites.

7. The representatives of the organizations reported on their current activities and plans for 1997, 1998 and beyond. They noted that they were continuing to implement the relevant recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82)[1] mostly as part of ongoing programmes. An exchange of views followed regarding how best to coordinate future activities. The representatives also expressed the interest of their organizations in contributing to the objectives of the UNISPACE III Conference and identified activities that could be worthwhile in preparation for the Conference and that could be used as a basis for the action plan that might result from it.

8. The Meeting noted the increasing interest at the regional level, particularly in Africa, in establishing the infrastructure for information networks and in Asia and the Pacific in promoting integrated uses of space science and technology applications for sustainable development. The Meeting also noted that several organizations were contributing to the establishment of such regional infrastructure and agreed that there was a need to further coordinate the efforts among the interested organizations within the United Nations system.

9. The Meeting concluded that efforts should continue to be focused on the identification of areas where the interests of different agencies coincided and where coordinated action could be undertaken.

10. The Meeting noted with appreciation the strong emphasis placed by the General Assembly, in its resolution 51/123, and by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on cooperation between organizations in the United Nations system and agreed to keep the Committee informed of the progress made in those activities.

11. The Meeting further stressed the importance of continued cooperation and coordination among the organizations in the United Nations system that were pursuing activities relating to outer space and that were represented at the Meeting. The Meeting reiterated its agreement that, through the inter-agency process, ways and means should be found to advance the views of each organization at the conferences of other organizations. It was noted that each organization should continue the useful practice of apprising its member States of the important issues that should be followed up by those member States in other forums.

2. Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations (agenda item 5 (b))

12. The Meeting had before it the draft annual report of the Secretary-General entitled "Coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system: programme of work for 1997, 1998 and future years". It was

the twenty-second report on the subject to be prepared; in it information from organizations within the United Nations system was presented in an integrated form, outlining planned activities by field of applications.

13. The Meeting noted that, in accordance with the agreement reached during its annual session in 1984 (ACC/1984/PG/8, para. 13), the draft report currently consisted of two major sections: one containing a summary of major planned activities and programmes, without reference to the organizations concerned, and the other containing a description of the future programmes of the individual organizations concerned.

14. The draft report contained information on activities and programmes involving the applications of space technology in the fields of remote sensing and geographic information systems, communications and navigation, meteorology and hydrology, basic space science, safety aspects and other related fields. It highlighted activities carried out jointly by the organizations concerned through cooperative programmes and included those carried out separately within their areas of competence. For the above-mentioned fields, those activities included: education and training courses, workshops, seminars and fellowships; expert services and survey missions to the countries concerned and the conducting of studies on pilot projects or the implementation of projects with operational applications of technology; and the dissemination or exchange of information on the status of technology or operational systems. The Meeting noted that the planned activities reflected part of the efforts of organizations to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

15. The draft coordination report was discussed in detail and a number of suggestions and comments were made, including the suggestion to amend the heading "Safety aspects" to read "Safety aspects and natural disaster reduction" in order to better accommodate activities in the field of natural disaster prevention, warning, mitigation and relief. The Meeting adopted the report as amended. The Meeting was informed that the final text would be made available to member States of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in document A/AC.105/675 during the fortieth session of the Committee, to be held from 2 to 13 June 1997.

16. The Meeting agreed that there was a need to review the categorization of space-related activities in the annual report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of the United Nations organizations. The Meeting also agreed that at its next session, in 1998, consideration should be given to possibly recategorizing space-related activities to better reflect in the annual report the priority application areas being identified by Member States, including consideration of the possibility of creating a new section that would emphasize the analytical views on the results of the coordination of activities conducted.

C. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote-sensing and related GIS activities: remote-sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 (agenda item 6)

17. Under item 6, the Meeting considered a number of issues, including a brief evaluation of activities supported in developing countries by organizations in the United Nations system. The Meeting focused on what the emphasis of such support should be in the future. Issues addressed in that context included: conferences, workshops and seminars on the applications of new and advanced systems; training and education programmes; institution-building; project formulation and execution; exchange of information; and other areas of inter-agency cooperation.

18. The Meeting noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-fourth session, in 1997, had emphasized the importance of making remote sensing data and analysed information openly available to all countries at reasonable cost and in a timely manner and had recognized the example of international cooperation in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the exchange of meteorological data as provided in resolution 40 adopted by the WMO Congress (A/AC.105/672, para. 62). The Meeting also noted that the

Subcommittee had once again stressed need for the international community to utilize remote-sensing data in an effort to fully implement the recommendations contained in Agenda 21,[2] adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992 (A/AC.105/672, para. 63).

19. The Meeting recalled that, as of September 1995, the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) had commenced the implementation of its new data policy.

20. The Meeting expressed concern regarding the implementation of the data access policy by EUMETSAT in connection with the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) related to the Africa Real-Time Environmental Monitoring Information Systems (ARTEMIS). It noted the impact of the current EUMETSAT data access policy on the availability of ARTEMIS data products in Africa. The Meeting was informed that, as of 1 January 1997, the ARTEMIS activity, which FAO was carrying out under its regular programme, had been classified by EUMETSAT as a commercial service provider and would be charged 100,000 United States dollars annually for its access to required Meteosat data. The Meeting was informed that FAO would not be able to sustain the payment of that annual fee beyond April 1998 and consequently would not be able to distribute ARTEMIS data outside its headquarters. The Meeting noted that, while an increasing number of African meteorological services, including the two African drought monitoring centres and the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, could currently generate information products similar to those of ARTEMIS, the implementation of the above EUMETSAT data access policy could have serious negative effects on a variety of non-profit operational users, particularly with regard to the timeliness of the data.

21. The Meeting requested WMO, which was the only organization in the United Nations system invited as an observer to attend the meetings of the EUMETSAT Council, to transmit the collective view of the Meeting to the Council that it should consider granting exceptions to its new data access policy to organizations within the United Nations system that utilize Meteosat data in programmes of a humanitarian nature. In particular, the Meeting requested WMO to stress in the Council meeting the humanitarian nature of the FAO activities for early warning for food security, which FAO had a mandate to carry out worldwide. The Meeting suggested that WMO and FAO, and possibly the Economic Commission for Africa, should seek possible ways to avoid negative effects on food security.

22. The Meeting agreed that, in its deliberations on matters relating to remote-sensing, several important points had been identified, particularly in the use of Earth observation data in projects aimed at protecting the environment and at supporting sustainable development, including the preparation of cartographic products in areas for which such basic planning elements did not exist. It was noted that discussions should continue on those points and other selected issues because, unlike other emerging areas of technology, such as manufacturing in the space environment, the benefits of which were not yet apparent as far as developing countries were concerned, remote-sensing was clearly an important tool for those countries.

23. The Meeting took note of the need for further inter-agency consultation on, and coordination of, the activities and programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly in view of the follow-up activities to be undertaken in response to Agenda 21. The Meeting agreed that the in-depth review of the cooperation of organizations of the United Nations system in remote sensing and related geographic information system (GIS) activities should be continued at its next session.

D. Review of progress on the proposed inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief (agenda item 7)

24. The Meeting recalled that at its seventeenth session, it had recognized the potential contribution of space technology to socio-economic development, particularly in the area of disaster prevention, warning and relief, and in that connection had noted with interest the project proposal by the Office for Outer Space Affairs regarding disaster warning for small island developing States. The Meeting also reiterated its agreement that the proposal should be submitted to other organizations involved in disaster-related activities for their consideration and comments, in particular to the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (A/AC.105/630, para. 30).

25. The Meeting was informed by the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the current status of that project proposal, which suggested the implementation of the project in Asia and the Pacific and in the Caribbean. The Meeting recommended that efforts should be made to identify potential recipients of the services to be provided through further conceptualization and finalization of the project proposal and to seek support for a pilot project from interested donors, including Governments and the private sector. In that connection, the Meeting welcomed the offer by UNIDO to use its large number of contacts among investors in both developing and developed countries.

E. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the United Nations Third UNISPACE Conference (UNISPACE III Conference) (agenda item 8)

26. The Meeting noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 51/123, had endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that a special session of the Committee (UNISPACE III), open to all Member States of the United Nations should be convened at the United Nations Office at Vienna, preferably in 1999. The Meeting also noted that the Assembly, in the same resolution, had requested the Committee, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Office for Outer Space Affairs to act as the Preparatory Committee, the Advisory Committee and the executive secretariat for UNISPACE III.

27. The Meeting was informed of the progress made in the discussions on the UNISPACE III Conference by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-fourth session in 1997. It had before it the report of the Subcommittee (A/AC.105/672), which contained the recommendations of the Advisory Committee concerning the objectives, form, venue, date, participants, provisional annotated agenda, financial aspects and additional components of the UNISPACE III Conference, as well as other matters relating to the convening of the Conference. The Meeting also noted that the Advisory Committee, in response to the request by the General Assembly, had outlined in 1997 the desired form of participation of relevant international, regional and other governmental and non-governmental organizations both in the preparatory activities of the UNISPACE III Conference and on the Conference itself.

28. The Meeting agreed that it would be desirable to have a theme for the UNISPACE III Conference. It suggested that the Preparatory Committee might wish to consider having "Space Benefits for Humanity in the twenty-first Century" as the theme.

29. Having reviewed the provisional annotated agenda for the UNISPACE III Conference and having noted the developments in space science and technology that had taken place since UNISPACE 82, the Meeting agreed to recommend to the Preparatory Committee that one of the main objectives of the UNISPACE III Conference should be to strengthen operational applications of space systems and ancillary technologies. The Meeting also agreed to recommend that particular attention should be given to enhancing the use of space-based information and communications technology to strengthen operational global observing systems in order to enable them to become more effective for the twenty-first century and to promoting a wider use of space

technologies in the prevention and mitigation of the effects of natural and technological disasters and in the provision of relief, as well as to monitoring environmental change at the global level.

30. The Meeting agreed to recommend to the Preparatory Committee that the Conference should pay particular attention to strengthening all aspects of space education.

31. The Meeting noted the intention of the Office for Outer Space Affairs to prepare background papers to cover the substantive agenda items of the UNISPACE III Conference, pending the approval by the Preparatory Committee in 1997. It welcomed the fact that the Office would invite the organizations within the United Nations system to contribute to those papers. The Meeting reviewed the list of the background papers to be proposed by the Office to the Preparatory Committee and agreed that the organizations should consider how they might contribute to the preparation of the background papers, as well as the possibility of individual organizations submitting their own background papers to the Conference.

32. The Meeting noted that the UNISPACE III Conference would be held in July 1999 and that, pursuant to a request by the Advisory Committee in 1997, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had informed the organizations within the United Nations system of the date of the Conference. The Meeting noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs would organize regional meetings in preparation for the Conference and welcomed the fact that the organizations, in particular the regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, would be invited to participate in the organization of those meetings.

33. The Meeting also noted several international and regional space-related conferences and meetings already scheduled by the organizations in 1999. The Meeting agreed that those conferences and meetings that would address issues related to the agenda items of the UNISPACE III Conference might be considered part of the preparatory or post-conference activities of the UNISPACE III Conference.

34. The Meeting requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to convey to the Preparatory Committee the willingness and intention of the organizations of the United Nations system to contribute, individually and collectively, to the attainment of the objectives of the UNISPACE III Conference.

F. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies (agenda item 9)

35. The Meeting recalled that at its seventeenth session it had agreed that the use of the Internet should be further expanded as a means of strengthening inter-agency coordination and had requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to determine whether such an expanded service could be ensured and to act as its central coordinator. The Meeting further recalled its agreement at that session that the Office for Outer Space Affairs could serve as a coordinating node for accessing space-related information of agencies in the United Nations system and that, for that purpose, the home page of the Office for Outer Space Affairs should contain pointers to access the home pages of other agencies (A/AC.105/630, paras. 32-33).

36. The Meeting welcomed a proposal presented to it by the Office for Outer Space Affairs on the enhancement of coordination of space activities within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies. The Meeting agreed with the objectives contained in the proposal, which included providing single-point access to all users to space-related information of the United Nations system and enhancing inter-agency cooperation.

37. In phase I of that proposal, the Office for Outer Space Affairs would establish within its home page, a page that would allow a visitor to the home page of the Office to visit the home pages of other organizations with

space activities. The Meeting agreed that the Office should proceed to resolve the administrative and technical issues related to that phase of the proposal in order to enable its implementation as soon as possible.

38. The Meeting agreed that further consideration should be given to the suggested procedure for implementing phases II and III of the project, namely the utilization of the Internet and its various services in preparing the annual report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space activities within the United Nations system and in creating an electronic forum for informal inter-agency dialogue on a more frequent basis to further enhance the inter-agency coordination of space applications activities.

39. The Meeting agreed that, on an experimental basis, FAO and WMO would work with the Office for Outer Space Affairs to contribute to the preparation of the next annual report of the Secretary-General, which would cover the programme of work for 1998, 1999 and future years, through the use of the Internet and its services as suggested in the proposal. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, FAO and WMO would report to the Meeting, at its nineteenth session, on the results.

40. The Meeting agreed that the use of the Internet and its services should not lead to additional work in the coordination of space activities within the United Nations system, compared with the current coordinating procedure followed by the Meeting. The Meeting noted possible difficulties in exchanging and disseminating information at the inter-agency level through the Internet that might result from different policies being applied by the organizations for authorizing such action.

II. FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK

41. The Meeting reiterated the importance of its continuing to meet on an annual basis, in order to better coordinate activities relating to outer space within the United Nations system. The Meeting recalled that various intergovernmental committees, particularly the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, had expressed concern about the duplication of efforts in the work of various organizations of the United Nations system. In that connection, the Meeting noted that its own work had helped to allay those concerns and that those committees had commended its work in their recent reports.

42. The Meeting noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-fourth session, in 1997, had continued to stress the necessity of ensuring continuous and effective consultations and coordination in the field of outer space activities among organizations within the United Nations system and the avoidance of duplication of activities (A/AC.105/672, para. 39). In view of the fact that the fortieth session of the Committee would be held immediately following the current session of the Meeting, the Meeting recommended that the present report should be brought to the attention of the Committee during its consideration of the report of the Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-fourth session and particularly in connection with its work as Preparatory Committee for the UNISPACE III Conference.

43. The participants considered the need for further inter-agency consultation on, and coordination of, the activities and programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly in view of the preparatory activities for the UNISPACE III Conference and the follow-up activities to be undertaken in response to Agenda 21. The participants therefore agreed that the nineteenth session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities should be held with the following major items on its provisional agenda:

1. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

2. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:

   (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes;

   (b) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations.

3. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the Third United Nations UNISPACE Conference (UNISPACE III Conference).

4. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote sensing and related GIS activities: remote-sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.

5. Review of progress on the proposed inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief.

6. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies.

7. Other matters.

44. The participants agreed that they should continue their in-depth review of cooperation between United Nations organizations in some specific areas of space applications, such as remote-sensing, communications, natural disaster reduction, environment monitoring, navigation, meteorology and related technology transfer, education, intellectual property and spin-off benefits, in order to ensure that the activities of the United Nations system in those areas were meaningfully integrated and the services rendered to Member States fully met their requirements in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

45. The Meeting recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 49/131, had proclaimed the year 1998 the International Year of the Ocean. Consequently, the Meeting recommended that special attention should be given to satellite observation and communications regarding the coastal and marine environment and the oceans.

46. The Meeting, recalling the agreement at its seventeenth session on the venue and dates of its future sessions (A/AC.105/630, para. 39) to be hosted by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, agreed that the next session should be convened at Vienna, from 27 to 29 May 1998 in conjunction with the forty-first session of the Committee. The agreement was made without prejudice to any invitation by an interested agency to host at its headquarters a future session of the Meeting.

47. The Meeting noted that some of the funding institutions in the United Nations system that had been invited were not present at the current session. The Meeting agreed that special efforts should be made to encourage the participation of funding institutions in the United Nations system in its future sessions.

Notes

[1]*Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 9-21 August 1982* and corrigenda (A/CONF.101/10 and Corr.1 and 2).

[2]*Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.1.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: V. KOJARNOVITCH (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)
Secretary: S. CAMACHO (United Nations)

United Nations Secretariat

Office for Outer Space Affairs	N. Jasentuliyana (Deputy to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna) A. Abiodun (Expert on Space Applications) T. Chiku (Assistant Secretary) V. Kotelnikov H. George M. Sanidas J. Thaker M. Hsieh
Department of Humanitarian Affairs; secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction	C. Rose
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	C. He
Economic Commission for Africa	A. Gulaid
United Nations Environment Programme	R. G. Witt

Specialized agencies and other organizations in the United Nations system

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	J. U. Hielkema
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	R. Missotten
International Civil Aviation Organization	E. R. Godberson
International Telecommunication Union	P. Korobenkov
World Meteorological Organization	R. C. Landis

* * *

International Atomic Energy Agency	I. Thompson

Annex II

AGENDA OF THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

1. Opening of the Meeting.

2. Election of the Chairman of the Meeting.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

5. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical applications of space technology and related areas:

   (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes:

      (i) United Nations Programme on Space Applications;

      (ii) Programmes of the other organizations;

   (b) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations.

6. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote-sensing and related GIS activities: remote-sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.

7. Review of progress on the proposed inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief.

8. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the United Nations Third UNISPACE Conference (UNISPACE III Conference).

9. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies.

10. Other matters:

   (a) Future meetings;

   (b) Additional matters.